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By *ADAM FITZ-ADAM.*

To be continued every THURSDAY.

THURSDAY, *November* the 28th, 1755.

Floriferis ut apes in ſaltibus omnia limant,
Omnia nos itidem depaſcimur aurea dicta. LUCRET.

To Mr. FITZ-ADAM.

SIR,

OXFORD, *Nov.* 11th, 1755.

I HAVE, for a long time paſt, had a ſtrong inclination upon me to become one of your correſpondents; but from the habits contracted from this place of my education and reſidence, I have felt a certain timidity in my conſtitution, which has hitherto reſtrained me (pardon the expreſſion) from venturing into the world. However, when I reflect that Oxford, as well as her ſiſter Cambridge, has always been diſtinguiſhed with the title of one of the eyes of England, I cannot ſuppoſe that you will pay ſo little reſpect to ſo valuable a part of the microcoſm, as to reject my letter with diſdain, merely becauſe it comes dated to you from this ancient ſeat of learning; eſpecially as I aſſure you, you ſhall ſee nothing in it that ſhall ſavour at all of that narrow and unſociable ſpirit, which was heretofore the characteriſtic of the productions of the college.

No,

No, Mr. Fitz-Adam, though learning itſelf be my ſubject, I will not treat of it in a manner that ſhall diſguſt the politeſt of your readers; and though I write from a place, which, within the memory of many now living, enjoyed in ſome ſort the monopoly of it, yet I will not lament the loſs of that privilege, but am, with Moſes, thoroughly contented that all the Lord's people ſhould be prophets.

INDEED, the main buſineſs I am upon is to congratulate the great world on that diffuſion of ſcience and literature, which, for ſome years, has been ſpreading itſelf abroad upon the face of it. A revolution this, in the kingdom of learning, which has introduced the levelling principle, with much better ſucceſs than ever it met with in politics. The old fences have been happily broken down, the trade has been laid open, and the old repoſitories, or ſtorehouſes, are now no longer neceſſary, or uſeful, for the purpoſe of managing and conducting it. They have had their day; and very good cuſtom and encouragement they had, while that day laſted: but ſurely our ſons, or, at fartheſt, our grand-ſons, will be much ſurpriſed, when they are told for what purpoſes they were built and endowed by our anceſtors, and at how vaſt an expence the journeymen and factors, belonging to them, were maintained by the public, merely to ſupply us with what may now be had from every coffee-houſe, and Robin Hood aſſembly. In ſhort, it has fared with learning as with our pine-apples. At their firſt introduction amongſt us, the manner of raiſing them was a very great ſecret, and little leſs than a myſtery. The expences of compoſt, hot-houſes, and attendance, were prodigious; and at laſt, at a great price, they were introduced to the tables of a few of the nobility and gentry. But how common are they grown of late! Every gardiner, that uſed to pride himſelf in an early cucumber, can now raiſe a pine-

apple;

apple; and one need not deſpair of ſeeing them ſold at ſix a penny in Covent-garden, and become the common treat of taylors and hackney coachmen.

The univerſity of London, it is agreed, ought to be allowed the chief merit of this general diſſemination of learning and knowledge. The ſtudents of that ample body, as they are leſs ſtraitened by rules and ſtatutes, have been much more communicative than thoſe of other learned ſocieties. It ſeems, indeed, to be their eſtabliſhed principle to let nothing ſtay long by them. Whatever they collect, in the ſeveral courſes of their ſtudies, they immediately give up again for the ſervice of the public. Hence that profuſion of hiſtorians, politicians, and philoſophers, with whoſe works we are daily amuſed, and inſtructed. I am told, there is not a Bookſeller within a mile of Temple-Bar, who has not one or two of theſe authors conſtantly in his pay, who are ready, at the word of command, to write a book of any ſize, upon any ſubject. And yet I never heard that any of theſe gentlemen ever drank, in a regular manner, of the waters of Helicon, or endeavoured to trace out that ſpring, by the ſtreams of Cam, or Iſis.

But it is not merely the regular book, or legitimate treatiſe, which has thus abounded with learning and ſcience, but our looſe papers and pamphlets, periodical as well as occaſional, are, for their bulk, equally profuſe of inſtruction. Monthly magazines, which, ſome years ſince, were nothing more than collections to amuſe and entertain, are now become the magazines of univerſal knowledge. Aſtronomy, hiſtory, mathematics, antiquities, and the whole myſtery of inſcriptions and medals, may now be had, freſh and freſh, at the moſt eaſy rates, from the repoſitories of any of theſe general undertakers. What an advantage is this to the modern ſtudent, to have his meſs of learning thus carved out for him, at proper ſeaſons and intervals, in quantities that will

will not over-cloy his ſtomach, or be too expenſive to his pocket! How greatly preferable, both for cheapneſs and utility, is this method of ſtudy, to that of propoſing a whole ſyſtem to his view, in all the horrid formalities of a quarto, or folio! Much praiſe and honour are undoubtedly due to the celebrated Mr. Amos Wenman, for reducing the price of punch, and ſuiting it to the capacities and circumſtances of all his Majeſty's ſubjects; and ſhall not that ſelf-taught philoſopher, Mr. Benjamin Martin, the great retailer of the ſciences, come in for ſome ſhare of our acknowledgment and commendation?

I EXPECT to be told, for indeed the objection is obvious enough, that ſince the ſtreams of learning have been thus generally diffuſive, they have, in conſequence of that diffuſion, been proportionably ſhallow. Now, notwithſtanding the prejudice which may ſtill prevail with a few grave and ſolemn mortals, againſt the ſhallowneſs of our modern learning, I ſhould be glad to know what good purpoſe was ever ſerved by all that profundity of ſcience, which they, and our anceſtors, ſeem ſo fond of. It was, as is allowed on all hands, confined to a very few of the candidates for literary reputation; and the many, who aimed at a ſhare of it, waded out of their depths, and became a ſacrifice to their own uſeleſs ambition. On the contrary, no one, that I know of, ever had his head turned, or his ſenſes drowned in the philoſophy of a magazine, or the critique of a newspaper. And thus the ſtream which lay uſeleſs when confined within it's banks, or was often dangerous to thoſe who endeavoured to fathom the bottom of it, has, by being drained off into the ſmaller rills and channels, both fertilized and adorned the whole face of the country. And hence, Mr. Fitz-Adam, have ariſen thoſe exuberant crops of readers, as well as writers. The idea of being a reader, or a man given to books, had heretofore ſomething very ſolemn and frightful in it. It conveyed

veyed the notion of ſeverity, moroſeneſs, and unacquaintance with the world. But this is not the caſe at preſent. The very deepeſt of our learning may be read, if not underſtood, by the men of dreſs and faſhion; and the ladies themſelves may converſe with the abſtruſeſt of our philoſophy, with great eaſe, and much to their inſtruction.

To ſay the truth, the men of this generation have diſcovered that what their fathers called ſolid learning, is a uſeleſs and cumberſome accompliſhment, incommodious to the man who is poſſeſſed of it, and diſguſtful to all who approach him. Something, however, of the ſort, that ſits light and eaſy upon us, we are willing to attain to: but ſurely, for this, there is no need of going to the expence of maſſy bullion, when our own leaf-gold, or a little foreign lacker, will anſwer the purpoſe full as well, and make a better figure to the world.

Give me leave, Mr. Fitz-Adam, to conclude with my congratulations to this place of academical education, on ſome happy ſymptoms I have lately obſerved, from whence it ſhould appear that the manufacture of modern learning may, one day, be able to gain ſome footing amongſt us. The diſadvantages it lies under, from ancient forms and eſtabliſhments, are, it is true, very great; the general inclination, I own, is ſtill againſt it; and the geniuſſes of our governors are, perhaps, as deep and as ſolid as ever; but yet, I hope, we have a ſet of young gentlemen now riſing, who will be able to overcome all difficulties, and give a politer turn to the diſcipline and ſtudies of the univerſity. I can already aſſure you, that the ſtudents of this new ſect, amongſt us, have advanced ſo far as to make the coffee-houſes the chief, and only, places of application to their ſtudies. The productions of your London authors are here taken in, as we call it, by ſubſcription; and, by this means, the deepeſt learning of the age may be dived into, at the

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